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**Life-Choices (A.) Harbach Die Wahl des Lebens in der antiken Literatur.
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Bär, Silvio

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The first part of the volume, then, is primarily concerned with presenting Solon as a political philosopher who received the opportunity to change Athenian law in ways that he judged – and posterity agreed – would increase fairness for all citizens. The second part collects the surviving fragments of Solon's poetry. This is not a new edition of the fragments – the text is that of M.L. West, *Iambi et Elegi Graeci* (1992) – but O. has provided each fragment with his own translation and commentary.

O.'s intention in his commentary is to situate each fragment within its historical and literary context. The commentary on fragments 1–3, for example, discusses the conflict between Athens and Megara over Salamis as well as some of the stylistic features of Solon's Greek, in a manner which should make the fragments accessible to a Greekless reader. Some historical and philosophical material from the first half of the volume is repeated, but this makes the commentary more convenient to use than it would be if the reader were repeatedly asked to consult earlier sections of the book.

Where he can, O. cites parallel passages or ideas. Sometimes, this tendency is more confusing than helpful. Solon's praise of the works of Aphrodite, Dionysus and the Muses, for example (fr. 26), receives not only brief discussions of Plutarch's use of the poem and of the symposium, but quotation from no fewer than eight works ranging from the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* to Byron's *Don Juan* and, in addition to these textual sources, an illustration of an erotic scene on a carved gemstone. More often, though, O.'s thoroughness in finding parallels and his attention to the contexts in which the fragments are preserved and how they were used by the ancient authors who quoted them, serve to orient rather than overwhelm the reader.

The combination of translation and commentary should make the collection useful to a broad audience. These are followed by a vocabulary list, a concordance of West's, Diehl's and Linforth's numbering of the fragments, and a list of ancient references to Solon. These features may interest only scholarly readers, although the vocabulary could be helpful for a student reading Solon in the original for the first time.

Overall, this is a book that undertakes several tasks and does not succeed equally in all. The narrative of Solon's life and career breaks no new historiographical ground, but it is clearly presented. The book is most successful as an appraisal of Solon's thought and his place in the history of political philosophy, and O.'s translations and commentary on Solon's poetry will provide a handy resource for a broad audience.

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LIFE-CHOICES

HARBACH (A.) *Die Wahl des Lebens in der antiken Literatur*. (Bibliothek der Klassischen Altertumswissenschaften 128.) Pp. xviii + 495, ills. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2010. Cased, €56. ISBN: 978-3-8253-5745-0.

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This study on 'life-choices in ancient literature' is based on H.'s doctoral thesis, accepted by the University of Geneva in December 2009. It examines and analyses

the motif of mythic heroes who, at the beginning of their adulthood, have to make a choice which is seminal for their future life and career. The scope of texts considered ranges from Homer to Xenophon and Plato, and from Roman literature to authors of the Second Sophistic such as Lucian and Philostratus. The book is divided into nine chapters, which are grouped into five sections.

Following a short introduction (pp. xiii–xviii) which locates the ‘life-choices’-motif within a cross-cultural context, the first main section presents and analyses five examples of this motif in Greek literature (‘Mythos Lebenswahl’: Chapter 1, ‘Lebenswahlen in Mythos und Literatur’, pp. 3–89): Achilles’ choice between a life that is glorious but short, and one that is ordinary but long; Odysseus’ choice between Calypso and Penelope; Heracles’ choice between *Arete* and *Kakia*; Paris’ judgement (that is, his choice between Hera, Athena and Aphrodite); and the brothers Amphion and Zethus and their contrasting ways of life. H. strongly emphasises that the way we tend to think of these myths as coherent and canonically fixed narratives is by no means congruent with the much more complex and often contradictory picture presented by the ancient sources. Of particular interest is H.’s comparison between the choices made by Heracles and those made by Paris and the structural and typological similarities between the two stories. These can be seen clearly in the case of mixed forms of the two, such as the depiction of Heracles’ choice as a kind of *iudicium Paridis* in Etruscan art. On the other hand, H.’s treatment of Amphion and Zethus as a further example of a *Lebenswahlmythos* does not seem entirely convincing, as this is not an example of a choice between two ways of life, but one of a dichotomy of two irreconcilable lifestyles that clash in the case of these two brothers. Hence, from a structural point of view, the case of Amphion and Zethus differs considerably from the other four examples.

The next section focusses on the famous choice of Heracles between a virtuous and a corrupt way of life (‘Die Wahl des Herakles’: Chapter 2, ‘Prodikos’ *Wahl des Herakles*’, pp. 95–134; Chapter 3, ‘Herakles’ Wahl bei späteren Autoren’, pp. 135–76). First, H. attempts to reconstruct Prodicus’ original version of Heracles’ choice, which is not directly attested but only reported in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* (2.1.21–34). Employing meticulous philological analysis, H. argues that neither the crossroads metaphor nor Heracles’ choice had originally been part of Prodicus’ speech, but that Heracles’ decision was meant to be deduced by the audience. Stimulating though this hypothesis is, it remains speculative. The subsequent chapter presents Heracles’ choice as represented in later Greek and Roman literature, with a particular focus on variations of Heracles’ dilemma. In this context, it is particularly interesting to see how in some cases the attribution of ‘attractive woman’ is transferred from *Kakia* to *Arete*, which thus corresponds to the traditional notion of Greek *καλοκάγαθία*. At the end of this chapter, H. mentions the fact that the juncture *βίου ἀρεσις*, a common Greek phrase for Heracles’ choice, does not have a Latin equivalent. Unfortunately, this observation is not pursued further, although it might have offered yet another opportunity to shed light on the potential differences between the Greek and Roman treatments of the myth.

In the subsequent section, H. proceeds to examine the use of Heracles’ choice as a metaphor for a poetic choice in Roman literature (‘Die Wahl des Dichters’: Chapter 4, ‘Der Dichter als Herakles’, pp. 181–231; Chapter 5, ‘Karrierepläne: die verkannten Heraklesse’, pp. 233–79). In these two chapters H. argues that both Propertius (2.10) and Virgil (*Georgics* 3.1–48) use the choice of Heracles as a pretext for their own metapoetic *recusatio* of the epic form – a *recusatio* that is, according to H., more usefully regarded as a *dilatatio* or a *recusatio* ‘manqué’.

Ovid, then, in *Amores* 3.1 refers to these two intertexts by portraying and caricaturing his colleagues (and predecessors) as ‘would-be Heracleses’. The assertion that Heracles’ choice is an obvious pretext for *Amores* 3.1 is not new; nor is equating *Elegia* and *Tragoedia* with ‘lower’ and ‘higher’ poetry respectively (cf. e.g. G. Bretzighheimer, *Ovids Amores* [2001], pp. 61–76). H.’s connection of the text with Prop. 2.10 and Virg. *Georg.* 3.1–48 is convincing, but her presentation of the material and the argumentation is unnecessarily circuitous, as it begins with an analysis of *Amores* 3.1 in Chapter 4 and then re-examines the whole issue with regard to the Propertian and Virgilian subtext in Chapter 5, rather than presenting and examining the whole issue progressively. Further, digressions such as that on Pales, Apollo and Pan (pp. 257–60) may be useful, but they distract the reader from the chapter’s central theme.

The next section is devoted to the use of Heracles’ choice as a poetic metaphor in post-Ovidian literature (‘Herakles’ Wahlverwandte’: Chapter 6, ‘Lukians “Traum” von Herakles’, pp. 299–321; Chapter 7, ‘Der Dichter und sein Held: Silius Italicus und Scipio’, pp. 323–47). In the case of Lucian’s (allegedly) autobiographical narration *The Dream*, the adaptation of Heracles’ choice serves to negotiate the speaker’s career choice; in Silius *Punica* 15.18–128, Scipio’s choice between *Virtus* and *Voluptas* is evidently modelled on Heracles’ choice between *Arete* and *Kakia*, but at the same time, as H. argues, it mirrors the poet’s choice for epic poetry.

The last section considers some cases of rejections or critical discussions of the established *Lebenswahlmythen* in ancient literature (‘Lebenswahl – neu konzipiert’: Chapter 8, ‘Neu bedachte Lebenswahlen’, pp. 353–89; Chapter 9, ‘Wahlbeteiligung: Horaz *Sat.* 1.1’, pp. 391–404). The most prominent example is Achilles in the *Odyssey*, who regrets the life-choice which led to his untimely death (*Od.* 11.488–91). H. intriguingly connects this episode with Demodocus’ tale about the quarrel between Achilles and Odysseus (*Od.* 8.73–82), arguing that they represent two types of different and conflicting heroes and thus, ultimately, stand for two types of epic poetry. Further texts analysed in this section include Plato’s ‘Myth of Er’ (*Rep.* 10.614–21), Apollonius’ life-choice in Philostratus’ *Vita Apollonii* (6.10–11) and Horace’s *Satire* 1.1.

From a formal point of view the book is well produced. However, the layout is marred by numerous widow lines and orphans and the exuberant use of italics for emphasis, which is often both unnecessary and unaesthetic. Further, H.’s prose suffers in parts from overuse of clichés, such as the newly-fashionable expression ‘kritisch hinterfragen’ (*passim*).

H.’s study leaves the reader with somewhat conflicting impressions. The topic is of great importance for ancient literature and culture. H. provides many interesting and fresh insights, and the book as a whole is a rich source of materials and ideas; but the reader is in many cases led round in circles, instead of being guided step by step towards the concluding point of an argument. Detailed additional information is sometimes introduced which is not essential to the main argument, so that coherence is undermined. One questions the extent and proportion of new insights and research findings relative to what is already known and established. The book is well worth reading, but it would have benefited considerably from being compressed, shortened and condensed.

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